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ABSTRACT

This research bulletin on inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings first outlines distinctions among mainstreaming, inclusion, and full inclusion. It explores whether federal law requires inclusion, the "down side" of inclusion, the impact of inclusion on classmates, supplementary aids and services, the arrangement of instruction to benefit all students, and skills teachers need in inclusive classrooms. An inclusion checklist is provided to help school personnel evaluate whether their practices are consistent with the best intentions of the inclusion movement. An annotated list of eight helpful resources concludes the bulletin. (JDD)

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The Inclusion Revolution

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Joy Rogers

Six-year-old Joseph Ford seemed an unlikely revolutionary. This exceptionally bright, cute little boy sought only to enter the first grade of the public "magnet school" attended by his older sisters. But Joe lived in Chicago where school officials had very different plans for him.

They were adamant that Joe should attend a segregated school for children who, like him, had physical disabilities. Children with such severe physical disabilities as Joe simply did not go to the city's outstanding magnet schools.

School officials extolled the benefits of all the physical therapy Joe would receive in the segregated school and insisted that he could not be educated in a magnet school. Joe's mom reasoned through the problem somewhat differently. She knew no amount of physical therapy would "cure" his cerebral palsy and that he would eventually have to earn his living using his superior intellect.

After a year-long struggle involving federal regulatory agencies and the highest officials in the school system, Joe won entry into the magnet school.

Even after he was allowed to enroll, the work was not over for Joe and his family. They had to overcome such barriers as school employees with negative attitudes, staff who often lacked skill at modifying instruction for him, and odd traditions (such as segregated school buses) within the school district. Joe's experience has been paralleled by hundreds of children in hundreds of communities throughout the country as parents have increasingly demanded and won integrated schooling for their children with disabilities. Parents whose children have severe learning and behavior problems have fought to assure that their children will have classmates who behave appropriately as role models. Pioneering kids like Joe have opened the schoolhouse doors in each of their communities for others to follow.

What's happened to Joe? He continues to thrive and is now a successful third grader. He is a bright, loving young man with strikingly mature values and an excellent chance to seize the future his parents have always believed he can attain. Not every child in a school which claims to be using inclusion has been as fortunate.

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So Many Words

Many different terms have been used to describe inclusion of students with disabilities in "regular" classes. None of these terms actually appears in federal law, but all have been used to express varying beliefs about what the law means — or should mean.

Mainstreaming: This term has generally been used to refer to the selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes. Mainstreaming proponents generally assume that a student must "earn" his or her opportunity to be mainstreamed through the ability to "keep up" with the work assigned by the teacher to the other students in the class. This concept is closely linked to traditional forms of special education service delivery.

Inclusion: This term is used to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students.) Proponents of inclusion generally favor newer forms of education service delivery such as the ones under the heading, "What Does Inclusion Look Like?"

Full Inclusion: This term is primarily used to refer to the belief that instructional practices and technological supports are presently available to accommodate all students in the schools and classrooms they would otherwise attend if not disabled. Proponents of full inclusion tend to encourage that special education services generally be delivered in the form of training and technical assistance to "regular" classroom teachers.

Regular Education Initiative: This phrase was coined by a former federal education official, Madeline Will, and has generally been used to discuss either the merger of the governance of special and "regular" education or the merger of the funding streams of each.

It is not generally used to discuss forms of service delivery.

Does Federal Law Require Inclusion?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that "Each public agency shall insure:
(a) Each handicapped child's educational placement: (1) is determined at least annually; (2) is based on his or her individualized education program; and (3) is as close as possible to the child's home. (b) The various alternative placements included under Reg. 300.551 are available to the extent necessary to implement the individualized education program for each handicapped child; (c) Unless a handicapped child's individualized education program requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school which he or she would attend if not handicapped; and (d) In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services which he or she needs." (34 CFR 300.552)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that "A recipient [of federal funds] to which this subpart applies shall educate, or shall provide for the education of, each qualified handicapped person in its jurisdiction with persons who are not handicapped to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the handicapped person. A recipient shall place a handicapped person in the regular educational environment operated by the recipient unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the education of the person in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Whenever a recipient places a person in a setting other than the regular educational environment pursuant to this paragraph, it shall take into account the proximity of the alternate setting to the person's home." (34 CFR 104.34)

In plain language, these regulations appear to require that schools make a significant effort to find an inclusive solution for a child. How far must schools go? In recent years, the federal courts have been interpreting these rules to require that children with very severe disabilities must be included in the classroom they would otherwise attend if not disabled even when they cannot do the academic work of the class if there is a potential social benefit, if the class would stimulate the child's linguistic development, or if the other students could provide appropriate role models for the student. In one recent case of interest, a court ordered a school district to place a child with an IQ of 44 in a regular second-grade classroom while rejecting the school district's complaints about expenses as exaggerated (Board of Education, Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland, 786 F.Supp. 874 (ED Cal. 1992)). In another case a federal court rejected a school district's argument that a child would be so disruptive as to significantly impair the education of the other children (Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District, 789 F.Supp. 1322 (D.N.J. 1992)). Educators need to be aware of such developments in the federal courts because court findings in one case tend to set precedent for future courts considering similar matters. These developments suggest that parents are increasingly able to go to the courts to force reluctant school districts to include their children in "regular" classes in situations where the child may not be able to "keep up" with the standard work of the class.

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Why Try Inclusion?

Two different lines of reasoning have converged in the inclusion movement. The first line of reasoning is the civil rights argument that segregated education is inherently unequal and, therefore, a violation of the rights of the children who are segregated. The second line of reasoning is that empirical analysis of the outcomes from established special education programs indicate that they just haven't worked. In spite of the steady expansion of a costly special education bureaucracy, the children served in special education programs have not shown the expected benefits in development of academic, social, or vocational skills.

In some schools, special and "regular" education personnel co-exist side by side, but do not work together. Teachers have separate classrooms, are paid from separate budgets, and work with different curricular materials. Scarce resources are hoarded rather than shared. In an inclusive school, resources are more efficiently used and reach the maximum number of children.

The "Down Side" of Inclusion

In one school claiming to be using inclusion, an observer noted 44 second graders watching a filmstrip as a science lesson with only one teacher in the room. The 44 children included a group of special education students, a group of limited English proficient students, and a "regular" class. Two other teachers assigned to the group were out of the classroom. Few educators would attempt to defend this kind of instruction as inclusion — nor could it easily be defended as science instruction either! Inclusion cannot be viewed as a way of eliminating special education costs. It is simply a way of reconceptualizing special education service delivery: the traditional model requires bringing the child to the special education services and the inclusion model requires bringing the special education services to the child.

Similar problems have arisen where school administrators have tried to assign several children with severe disabilities to the same classroom. Although mild disabilities are relatively common (affecting about one child in ten), severe disabilities are far less common (affecting only about one child in a hundred). Thus, if four or five children with severe disabilities are placed with the same class of about 25 children, it is statistically extremely unlikely that the classroom is actually the room to which all of those children would possibly have been assigned if they had not been disabled. This is not inclusion. Such arrangements tend not to be beneficial to any of the children in the class — and create extremely frustrating work environments for the teachers who are assigned to such classes. It is easy to see why teachers in such situations might feel ineffective or exploited! Inclusion works when all staff members in the school accept their fair share of responsibility for all the children who live within the school's attendance area.

How Does Inclusion Affect Classmates?

Some misguided efforts at inclusion have simply moved children with disabilities into general education classrooms and left them for their classmates to teach. Although tutoring others can often be a good way to learn for both the included child and the tutor, if peer tutoring becomes the predominant mode of instruction, then neither child is receiving appropriate services.

The presence of an included classmate should provide opportunities for growth for the entire class.

- Classmates can develop a sense of responsibility and the enhanced self-esteem which results from such responsibility
- Classmates' understanding of the range of human experience can be enhanced.
- Classmates can benefit from their disabled classmates as role models in coping with disabilities. As a result of advancements in medical science, most of those presently nondisabled children will survive to become persons with disabilities themselves one day.
- Classmates are enriched by the opportunity to have had friends with disabilities who successfully managed their affairs and enjoyed full lives.

Effective teachers do not permit a classroom environment in which any child is the victim of ridicule. They arrange learning environments in which every child has opportunities to lead and to experience successes, and they value diversity because it helps them prepare their students to be capable citizens in a democracy.

What Are "Supplementary Aids and Services?"

Classroom teachers have sometimes been disappointed to discover that every included child does not come with his/her own full-time aide. The determination about what supplementary aids and services are needed is unique for each child and is specified in the child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Very few children have individual aides either in special education

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classes or when included in general classes. Indeed, managing paraprofessionals adds another time-consuming duty for which some teachers are poorly prepared. An incident in one school illustrates how aides can actually interfere with inclusion. In that school the child's individual aide befriended the classroom aide. The result was that instead of being with his classmates at lunch time, that child was seated alone with the two adult aides who enjoyed each others' company at lunch. Aides are very important in some situations, but the addition of adults in a classroom is not a panacea.

The most common supplementary aids and services are actually consultation and training for the teacher. For example, a teacher receiving a blind student for the first time may need initial guidance in how to arrange the classroom and may need continuing suggestions on how to adapt his or her lesson plans to help the blind student understand the concept to be taught.

Electronic aids and services are becoming increasingly common. Some students will use computers, speech synthesizers, FM amplification systems, etc. Other very important aids and services may be much less technologically sophisticated. Simple accommodations such as large print books, preferential seating, behavior management programs, or a modified desk are sufficient for many students with severe disabilities to be successfully included.

In schools where inclusion works well, it is important for the classroom teacher to have regular access to support staff who can help the teacher find equipment or procedures which permit all the children in the class to benefit from the instruction.

Some children need life-sustaining equipment previously unfamiliar in educational settings. Some children need suctioning, clean intermittent catheterization, or frequent positioning changes. Some children need daily medication, access to an epinephrine "pen," or blood sugar monitoring. Necessary supports may include both the equipment and the trained personnel needed to do these tasks. If children are carriers of communicable diseases for which immunization is available, necessary supports for their teachers can include immunization against those diseases.

People who have not seen children with disabilities successfully included in public school classes sometimes create barriers to inclusion because they may fear what they do not understand.

In some communities, teachers have feared that they will be asked to do new or difficult tasks without sufficient training and support. Administrators may fear loss of state or federal reimbursement unless special education students are placed in special education classrooms. Parents of nondisabled students may fear that their children will not get a fair share of the teacher's attention. Parents of the students with disabilities may fear that their children will lose special services which have been helpful.

However, a rapidly growing "track record" of inclusion indicates that, when done with care, inclusion does not create unreasonable demands on teachers or deprive classmates of learning opportunities. Indeed, inclusive classrooms offer some unique benefits for all who participate.

What Does Inclusion Look Like?

Effective inclusion is characterized by its virtual invisibility. One cannot go to look at the special education classrooms in an inclusive school because there are none. Children with disabilities are not clustered into groups of persons with similar disabilities, but are dispersed in whatever classrooms they would otherwise attend. There are not lots of little rooms labeled "LD Resource," "Emotionally Disturbed," "Speech," or "Trainable." In an inclusive school, special education teachers do not have their own classrooms, but are assigned to other roles such as team teaching in classrooms that serve both disabled and nondisabled students together.

The schools that most readily adopt the concept of inclusion are generally those that already embrace instructional practices which are designed to provide challenging learning environments to children with very diverse learning characteristics. Such practices include heterogenous grouping, peer tutoring, multi-age classes, middle school structures, "no-cut" athletic policies, cooperative learning, and development of school media centers which stimulate students' electronic access to extensive databases for their own research.

Each of these innovations has been demonstrated in numerous studies to enhance teachers' capacities to meet the individual needs of students.

What If The Included Student Can't Keep Up With The Class?

Each included student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) which specifies what he or she needs to learn and, sometimes, that may not mean that the student will be learning the same things as the other students. The teacher's job is to arrange instruction that benefits all the students — even though the various students may derive different benefits. For example, most of the students in the class may be learning the total number of degrees in the angles of a triangle while the included student may be learning to recognize a triangle. Good teachers maximize the opportunities for all students to learn even though they may be learning at different levels. In general, good teachers help their included students to accomplish just as many as possible of the goals of the classroom and to function just as close as possible to the way that their peers function. Good administrators do not evaluate teachers with included students on the basis of the average academic achievement scores of their classes, but rather on the progress made by all the students.

An Inclusion Checklist For Your School

_____1. Do we genuinely start from the premise that each child belongs in the classroom he or she would otherwise attend if not disabled (or do we cluster children with disabilities into special groups, classrooms, or schools)?

_____2. Do we individualize the instructional program for all the children whether or not they are disabled and provide the resources that each child needs to explore individual interests in the school environment (or do we tend to provide the same sorts of services for most children who share the same diagnostic label)?

_____3. Are we fully committed to maintenance of a caring community that fosters mutual respect and support among staff, parents, and students in which we honestly believe that nondisabled children can benefit from friendships with disabled children and disabled children can benefit from friendships with nondisabled children (or do our practices tacitly tolerate children teasing or isolating some as outcasts)?

_____4. Have our general educators and special educators integrated their efforts and their resources so that they work together as integral parts of a unified team (or are they isolated in separate rooms or departments with separate supervisors and budgets)?

_____5. Does our administration create a work climate in which staff are supported as they provide assistance to each other (or are teachers afraid of being presumed to be incompetent if they seek peer collaboration in working with students)?

_____6. Do we actively encourage the full participation of children with disabilities in the life of our school including co-curricular and extracurricular activities (or do they participate only in the academic portion of the school day)?

_____7. Are we prepared to alter support systems for students as their needs change through the school year so that they can achieve, experience successes, and feel that they genuinely belong in their school and classes (or do we sometimes provide such limited services to them that the children are set up to fail)?

_____8. Do we make parents of children with disabilities fully a part of our school community so they also can experience a sense of belonging (or do we give them a separate PTA and different newsletters)?

_____9. Do we give children with disabilities just as much of the full school curriculum as they can master and modify it as necessary so that they can share elements of these experiences with their classmates (or do we have a separate curriculum for children with disabilities)?

_____10. Have we included children with disabilities supportively in as many as possible of the same testing and evaluation experiences as their nondisabled classmates (or do we exclude them from these opportunities while assuming that they cannot benefit from the experiences)?

This checklist may help school personnel in evaluating whether their practices are consistent with the best intentions of the inclusion movement. Rate your school with a + for each item where the main statement best describes your school and a 0 for each item where the parenthetical statement better describes your school. Each item marked 0 could serve as the basis for discussion among the staff. Is this an area in which the staff sees need for further development? Viewed in this context, an inclusive school would not be characterized by a particular set of practices as much as by the commitment of its staff to continually develop its capacity to accommodate the full range of individual differences among its learners.

What Skills Do Teachers Need In Inclusive Classrooms?

Most experienced teachers are quick to note that the students who come to them are increasingly needful of special attention. Whether or not the students are classified as special education students, the complexity of social problems which impact on children in the nineties means that far more children need extra help. In addition to schoolwork, children may need help finding adequate food, being safe from abuse, and developing motivation to learn.

The diversity of children in today's schools is often already very great. The inclusion of a child with a disability into this mix is most likely to add one child who has more needs than the others, but not needs that are more severe than needs already represented in the class. The best teachers in inclusive classrooms are simply the best teachers. The best teachers teach each individual student rather than try to gear instruction to the average of a group. The best teachers have a high degree of "with-itness," that is, they are highly aware of the dynamics of their classrooms. The best teachers are versatile. They are comfortable using many different teaching techniques and can readily shift among them as needed. The best teachers enjoy and value all their students—attitudes which are visible to others as they teach.

Inclusion has become such a value laden word that it is currently very difficult to state opposition to inclusion. However the pressure to appear to be inclusive may create many problematic practices that either do not have inclusive effects or, in some cases, do not fit within the existing knowledge base of educational practice. Thus, extensive debate on the question of whether "inclusion" is a good idea has produced much heat, but little light. More useful outcomes are likely to result when the staff of a school works together to determine how it can meet the needs of those specific children who live in its attendance area. The preceding checklist (see page 5) may help school personnel in evaluating whether their practices are consistent with the best intentions of the inclusion movement.

Helpful Resources

1. *Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools.* This 1992 report is available from the National Association of State Boards of Education, 1012 Cameron Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. It features descriptions of how various schools, school districts, and states have transformed their schools into effective learning environments for all children.

2. *Report Card to the Nation on Inclusion in Education of Students with Mental Retardation.* This 1992 report is available from The ARC, 500 E. Border Street, S-300, Arlington, Texas 76010. It provides comparative data analyzing the degree of success at fostering inclusion among the various states.

3. *Special Education at the Century's End: Evolution of Theory and Practice Since 1970.* This 1992 collection of readings is edited by Thomas Hehir and Thomas Latus and is available from *Harvard Educational Review*, Gutman Library, Suite 349, 6 Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. The readings are particularly useful in developing an understanding of how the concept of inclusion arose within special education.

4. *Integrating General and Special Education.* This 1993 volume is edited by John Goodlad and Thomas Lovitt and is available from Macmillan Publishing Company, 866 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022. The chapters represent a wide variety of viewpoints about how general and special education can work more effectively together.

5. *Techniques for Including Students with Disabilities: A Step-by-Step Practical Guide for School Principals.* This 1992 volume by E. John Shinsky is available from Shinsky Seminars Inc., 3101 North Cambridge Road, Lansing, Michigan 48911. It provides numerous reproducible checklists useful in developing readiness for inclusion among school personnel.

6. *Behind Special Education.* This 1991 volume by Thomas Skrtic is available from Love Publishing Company, Denver, Colorado 80222. It offers a conceptual analysis of issues in both general and special education underlying contemporary calls for change.

7. *Regular Lives.* This 1988 video was produced by Syracuse University and is available from the Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. It illustrates students of different ages in inclusive settings.

8. *Curriculum Considerations In Inclusive Schools.* This 1992 volume edited by William and Susan Stainback is available from Brookes Publishing Company, P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624. Its chapters suggest inclusive strategies useful in various educational settings.

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